

Resolution by the California Biodiversity Council

Strengthening Agency Alignment for Natural Resource Conservation

WHEREAS, California is one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world. The state's rich natural heritage, wildlife and fish habitat, recreation and aesthetic values, water and air quality provides the basis for California's economic strength and quality of life. Sustaining the diversity and condition of these natural ecosystems is a prerequisite for maintaining the state's prosperity.

WHEREAS, public agencies have long shared a commitment to conserve the natural environment of the state. Many laws, policies, plans, and programs are already in place to protect many of the elements of California's natural heritage.

WHEREAS, The California Biodiversity Council (CBC) was formed in 1991 to improve coordination and cooperation between agencies with biodiversity conservation responsibilities at the federal, state, and local levels.

WHEREAS, The Council began with 10 original members and has expanded over the years to include 42 members. Council members represent the executive leadership of agencies from local, state, tribal, and federal agencies that are responsible for conserving biological resources in California. The MOU that created the Council states that members agree to do the following:

- Make the maintenance and enhancement of biological diversity a preeminent goal in their protection and management policies.
- View biological diversity as an attribute of natural processes operating at the landscape, ecosystem, species, and genetic levels.
- Develop coordinated regional strategies that ensure protection of biological diversity and the maintenance of economic viability throughout California.
- Use improved coordination, information exchange, conflict resolution, and collaboration as the basic means of implementing the strategy among the parties.
- Give public lands first preference as reserves and conservation areas. Impacts on private lands will be minimized to the degree possible.
- Establish measurable baselines and standards of diversity as a means to conserving biological resources over time.

WHEREAS a growing body of scientific research, demonstrates the need to move beyond existing efforts focused on the conservation of individual sites, species, and resources. The Council now recognizes the need to work in ways that transcend individual agencies ownerships, missions, and authorities. This work will involve agencies working together in non-traditional ways that lead to strong alignment of conservation goals, plans, policies and regulations across ownerships and jurisdictions.

RESOLVED, In recognition of the need for agencies to work together in new ways to conserve California's natural resources, the Council resolves to do the following:

Vision

Over time, the broad goals and conservation measures for biodiversity adopted by agencies from all levels of government are aligned and government operations are more efficient. As a result, the plans, programs, policies, and regulations described in agency documents portray a consistent vision of desired, and regionally-appropriate, conditions for conservation and management of natural resources across California.

Goals

- increased coordination with all levels of governments and agencies (federal, tribal, state, local), stakeholder groups, private landowners, and others;
- increased effectiveness through leveraging of existing networks, relationships, and multiagency venues;
- improved sharing of data, information, tools and science among governments and agencies;
- better alignment of planning, policies and regulations across governments and agencies; and coordinated and streamlined permitting to increase regulatory certainty.

Guiding Principles

The Council agrees that alignment works best when agencies adopt the following principles. The Council adopts these principles to:

1. respect and value the roles and responsibilities of other agencies
2. work together to identify common goals for natural resource conservation
3. involve each other early and often during their planning work
4. strive for shared ownership of conservation goals and practices in their plans
5. empower interagency teams to find solutions and resolve areas of conflict
6. seek small, early successes that can lead to broader solutions for larger issues
7. use inclusive, transparent, and collaborative processes to increase trust and improve relationships
8. consider new approaches to long-standing issues
9. use science as an important foundation for planning and policy
10. provide a framework for learning conservation work
11. take an outcome-based approach at a regional scale for setting policies and regulations

Recommended Practices and Tools

The Council agrees that alignment works best when agencies use the following practices where appropriate. The member agencies will strive to:

1. involve interested agencies with overlapping authorities at the beginning and throughout their planning process; including representatives state, federal, tribal, and local government
2. start the process by providing clear and concise preliminary goals and objectives
3. use standard terms and make relevant data available to all parties
4. offer ground rules for participation that are clear and accepted
5. document all significant agreements and commitments
6. identify areas of agreement and respect and acknowledge areas of disagreement
7. involve objective, third-party facilitation to guide public engagement, build trust, and resolve conflicts
8. use deliberative approaches with stakeholder involvement for issues or areas of high risk and high uncertainty
9. adopt collaborative adaptive management for all-party involvement with actions that involve considerable risk and uncertainty
10. engage staff and make resources available to help the alignment of their plans, programs, policies, and regulations
11. coordinate research and data collection activities among programs where appropriate.

Recommended Organizational Improvements

The Council agrees to work towards the following improvements that will assist with the alignment of natural resource conservation plans, programs, policies, and regulations:

1. An interagency committee will coordinate alignment activities, evaluate risks and opportunities, and maintain an inventory/description of communication and planning processes and tools. All interested agencies will be represented. The committee will draft a charter to describe the roles, responsibilities and outcomes to improve alignment among participating agencies. The Committee will provide regular reports to the CBC Executive Committee.
 - A. At a minimum, the committee will discuss and coordinate the following:
 - 1) Interagency involvement with planning, programs, policy, and regulation development
 - 2) Use of common terminology and metrics (indicators) for evaluating natural resources trends and conditions and the effectiveness of agency alignment
 - 3) Aligning the formatting of agency data and documents so they are accessible and portable among agencies
 - 4) An inventory and sharing of natural resources data
 - 5) Public involvement processes to improve public service


- B. In addition, the Committee may also choose to coordinate:
- 1) The development of broad conservation goals for use among agencies
 - 2) The identification of priority areas for conservation across ownerships
 - 3) A comprehensive planning calendar across agencies
 - 4) A library/inventory of agency conservation data, plans, programs, policies, and regulations
 - 5) Training to improve alignment of planning among agencies and public engagement
 - 6) Creation of flow chart on agency responsibilities
 - 7) A process for involving tribal leaders
 - 8) Timing and procedures for coordinating grant applications

- C. The committee may also wish to develop recommendations for agency alignment around the following topics:

- 1) Climate Change
- 2) Permit Coordination
- 3) Ecosystem Services
- 4) Funding for conservation work
- 5) Opportunities for Alignment
- 6) Effectiveness of state and federal programs in local areas
- 7) Invasive species
- 8) Restoration
- 9) Preventative Conservation
- 10) Fire, Water
- 11) Opportunities for young people to practice conservation

2. The California Biodiversity Council will provide oversight and coordination among agency leaders. The Council will be provided with progress reports at each regular meeting. The Council will direct the Executive Committee to work closely with the interagency team evaluate the performance of this program after 24 months.
3. The California Biodiversity Council will encourage other collaborative entities/venues to adopt these principles, practices and tools, including but not limited to the: Strategic Growth Council, Ocean Protection Council, CA Landscape Conservation Cooperative, Delta Stewardship Council, Water Plan State Agency Steering Committee, Resource Conservation Districts, Integrated Regional Water Management Groups, Regional Blueprint (transportation) Planning Groups, etc.

Approved at February 6, 2013 CBC meeting:



John Laird
Secretary for Natural Resources
State of California



James G. Kenna
State Director, California
USDI Bureau of Land Management